



St. Lawrence has played hockey at the 3,200-seat campus arena since Jan. 20, 1951.



Reflections of a River Rat:

SLU arena and golf course salute ...
what's his name? ... Appleton

As a boy, I visited Appleton Arena several Thanksgiving weekends for the hockey tournament that pitted St. Lawrence University and Clarkson against a Canadian and Ivy League school. The students were on holiday so you were guaranteed a great seat to watch these talented collegians dance on skates and rifle shots on goal.



As an adult, I made it a summer tradition to hack my way through the pines and fairways of SLU's Appleton golf course. Nobody paid to see me play. No course record was ever threatened.

When you play alone at sunrise, you have plenty of time to think. This Oliver Appleton fellow must have been a generous guy, I thought. Golf course and hockey rink? Then I discovered it's two men – father and son – both SLU alumni.

SLU's hockey barn is named for Charles William Appleton, an 1897 graduate of who became a federal magistrate and assistant district attorney in New York City. He also served as a vice president of General Electric.

The golf course was named for Oliver Dayton Appleton, a 1927 graduate who parlayed his business acumen into a lucrative career as an investment banker.

Whether father or son, one thing is clear -- they held an affinity for their Canton alma mater and they were generous. But their backgrounds were not readily available. So I started digging.



Oliver Appleton wears the white sweater with an L as St. Lawrence team captain in 1927. Games were played outdoors.

The SLU Athletic Hall of Fame offered a few scant lines about Oliver, inducted in 1982. He was the first captain of the university hockey team, dating to his senior season in 1927. SLU was playing only a handful of games, going 3-4 on an outdoor rink, but Appleton was a busy fellow. He also played football and lacrosse, was a member



OLIVER DAYTON APPLETON, B.S.
New York City
Alpha Tau Omega, Pi Delta Epsilon, Kixioc
Pay-up Day Committee (4), Economics Club (2) (3), "L" Club, Varsity Football (2) (4), Squad (1) (3), Varsity Hockey (3) (4), Varsity Lacrosse (1) (2) (3) (4), Business Manager Hill News (4), Business Manager Gridiron (4).

Ollie is easy to meet but much of the nature of a complex to understand. He mingles a noisy adolescence with the courtesy and consideration of a gentleman; a restless, devil-may-care attitude with a canny cautious procedure. He might be the hero of a modern novel of college life, or again he might have been a Phi Beta.

of an honorary journalism society, Pi Delta Epsilon, and a member of Kixioc, a men's senior honors society.

As an undergraduate, he already was

developing his financial acumen as business manager for the yearbook, "Gridiron," and a weekly student journal, "The Hill News." He also served on the

finance council of the student government association, Thelomathesian Society, today known as Thelmo.

Oliver got a positive, but mixed review in his university yearbook.

“Ollie is easy to meet but much of the nature of a complex to understand. He mingles a noisy adolescence with the courtesy and consideration of a gentleman; a restless, devil-may-care attitude with a canny cautious procedure.”

Regardless, he was bound for business success. He was named to the Alumni Council and later became a university trustee. He made partner at the high-powered New York firm of Cyrus J. Lawrence and Sons, which held a seat on the New York Stock Exchange. In 1947, he became a director of the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and later chairman of the Boston and Maine Railroad.

His father died at age 70 in January 1945 while St. Lawrence trustees first were discussing plans for an indoor arena. Oliver was one of three members of the construction committee. By February 1950, the full board of trustees approved a building plan.

In his book, “The Saga of St. Lawrence University Hockey,” author Robert Graham wrote that trustees expected to spend \$400,000. The university had commitments in the North Country of \$150,000, and the students had been challenged to raise \$20,000. They beat their goal by \$5,000.

When the university moved within \$87,000 of its fundraising goal in March 1950, the trustees, led by Gouverneur native and philanthropist Edward John Noble, started construction.



St. Lawrence lost its inaugural game at Appleton Arena, 5-3, to Dartmouth on Jan. 20, 1951.



Oliver Appleton, right, watched the Appleton Arena opener from university president Eugene Bewkes' box. From left, trustee Homer Vilas, Bewkes and trustee Selden Williams.

Oliver donated a sizable amount so the arena was named the Charles W. Appleton Memorial Arena. Oliver sat with university president Eugene Bewkes in his special box, just below the press box, on opening night, Jan. 20, 1951, when the Larries lost 5-3 to Dartmouth.

Appleton Arena was being pushed as the "Madison Square Garden of the North." Its wooden bleacher seats accommodated 3,200 for ice shows, university basketball games, winter carnivals and Section X basketball playoffs.

Appleton underwent a major renovation after the 2018-19 season, but the wooden bleachers and laminated-arched ceiling were retained, keeping the the women's team reopened the arena on Jan. 18, 2020, with a 1-0 win over Clarkson.



The first SLU basketball game at Appleton Arena. It also hosted Section X playoffs.



The coincidences never cease to amaze me. While researching, I learned that author Graham had passed in 2021. Long before he started his career as a Norwood-Norfolk English teacher and administrator, he was a Staten Island boy who moved to Morristown in 1946 and lived near the volunteer fire hall. I found him in the 1949 yearbook as a fifth-grade student before he left to attend military school in Manlius, outside of Syracuse.

He returned to the North Country in 1958 to attend St. Lawrence. He published his book in 2009 as a gift to the university.

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